

STAT

Page Denied

STAT

EXPERIENCES GAINED FROM WORKER AND PEASANT SHORT-TERM SCHOOLS IN CHINA

[Comment: This report presents in full five articles selected from the Kung-nung Chiao-yu Ts'an-kao Tzu-liao (Reference Materials on Worker and Peasant Education), a compilation of articles on worker and peasant education in China, published by the Hua-nan Jen-min Ch'u-pan-she, Canton, March 1951.

The articles selected discuss the problems involved in operating worker and peasant short-term schools.

WORKER AND PEASANT SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHEAST

(Prepared by the Northeast Department of Education, 19 September 1950)

Worker and peasant schools were established in the Northeast on instructions from the central and northeast governments. The Worker and Peasant Short-Term Middle School organized by the Northeast Department of Education now has 119 students divided into four classes. The school in Mukden has 81 students, the school in Harbin has 138 students, and the school in Dairen has 143 students, each in four classes.

Most of these students come from the ranks of workers, peasants, soldiers, and revolutionary cadres. In some schools, almost one third of the students have at least 3 years of revolutionary experience or have actively participated in the land-reform movement. Over 90 percent of the students are members of the party or the youth corps.

Most of the students are graduates of elementary or middle schools. But because there are so many illiterate students, several of the schools have had to organize special classes for these persons. However, the greatest problem is the indifferent attitude of the students. Many of them fail to realize that their problem calls for 7 long years of hard study. They are inclined to take the courses lightly and to hurry through their lessons.

However, all the students have a high degree of political consciousness and are rich in practical experience. Although they are weak in a general knowledge of science, they are enthusiastic pupils who have strong reasoning powers. With these strong and weak points in mind, the worker and peasant schools in the Northeast tailor their work to fit the needs of their students.

On the whole, the teachers in the worker and peasant schools are above-average middle-school teachers. Most of them are old and experienced teachers. However, they lack revolutionary experience and are not familiar with teaching in worker and peasant schools. They also use some outmoded teaching methods. However, the younger group of teachers took up their work with enthusiasm and have tried to overcome all their difficulties.

Most of the students are party or youth corps members, but very few of the teachers belong to any organization. At first, the teachers were worried because they feared the students would not respect them on this account. However, this problem was avoided by correcting the thinking of the teachers and the students.

Most of the teachers take their responsibilities seriously and exert every effort to help the students. However, some of the teachers look on the classes as temporary or speed-up classes and have moved ahead too quickly with their lessons, with the result that the students fall behind and get into difficulties.

STAT

Lessons Learned During the Experimental Period

There has been much misunderstanding regarding the selection of students. Many government offices have refused to let their good cadres attend school and instead have sent the less capable ones. To correct this erroneous thinking, it was found necessary to hold meetings to explain to the officials the purpose and importance of this program. The result is that the officials usually cooperate and send qualified students.

The written entrance examinations should also be adapted to the degree of literacy of the applicants. The questions should be simple and clear. Also, the subject matter should be familiar. An oral examination is also necessary because many of the applicants cannot read well or put their thoughts in writing.

Regarding instruction in worker and peasant schools, all classroom work must be related to everyday life. The students will grasp a problem much quicker if it concerns something familiar. In teaching arithmetic, mental calculation must be tied in with written work because many students can give an oral but not a written answer to a problem.

Because of the varying standards of the students, teachers often experienced difficulties in class. To remedy this situation, special coaching classes were arranged for the substandard students. This overcame complaints that the teacher was going too fast. Students above the standard of the class were encouraged to do outside reading to improve their knowledge of the language.

The curriculum should be based on the regulations governing worker and peasant schools promulgated by the Ministry of Education of the Central People's Government and the Northeast People's Government. Language should have priority. Physics, chemistry, history, geography, political science, and natural science are secondary subjects. During the first year, great emphasis must be placed on language and arithmetic.

Until special textbooks are designated for worker and peasant schools, the teachers should use language texts adopted by experimental schools and science texts translated from Russian. Books on the Chinese revolution by Yu Kuang-yuan and Wang Hui-te are used in the political science course.

Future Work

Of the 220,000 old and new cadres in the Northeast, only about 50,000 are graduates of junior middle school or higher. Thus, over 160,000 cadres have an education below this level. Therefore, there is an urgent need to expand the worker and peasant school system so that more cadres from the working and farming classes can obtain an education. This educational program could be developed in the armed forces, the factories, and the mines.

Special attention must be paid to recruiting students. Heretofore, school authorities relied solely on newspaper advertisements and introductions from government offices. Officials of the government agencies involved should be taught the importance of training worker and peasant cadres to help build the nation. Wide publicity for the schools should be given in party newspapers. By these means, learning can be made available to the mass of workers and peasants.

STAT

Another need is the reform of the examination system. The system of written examinations is not suited to worker and peasant cadres, and is a remnant of old educational practices. To meet the needs of students in worker and peasant schools, examinations should be oral.

Time must also be considered in selecting students for the school. The student must be healthy and not too old. He must not have family burdens. He must have a good educational background, and must have a determination to complete his course.

During the period of study, the material needs of the students should be well-provided. The food supplied by the school could be supplemented by vegetables and hogs raised by the students. Those with family responsibilities should be helped with their problems. During the period of study, the students should receive the same salary they got when working.

In regard to accelerating the courses, experience has shown that the middle-school course should be covered in 3-4 years. At the beginning, proper emphasis must be placed on the basic subjects, such as language and arithmetic. With a good foundation in these, the students can progress rapidly.

Finally, good teachers must be employed. Those teachers who are qualified in their field and who are patient will be successful. Students in worker and peasant schools have good minds, and can progress if they get proper instruction.

PEIPING EXPERIMENTAL WORKER AND PEASANT SHORT-TERM MIDDLE SCHOOL

(Prepared by P'u Hsi-hsiu, and published in the Shanghai Wen-wei Pao, 3 June 1950)

The Peiping Experimental Worker and Peasant Short-Term Middle School was founded on the principle that it should be the best school possible at the least expense. Consequently, the school was established as an auxiliary to the Ta-tung Middle School.

The school now has 116 students, selected from a list of 194 applicants submitted by the Government Administration Council, the Department of Organization of the Central Party Committee, and the Bureau of Education and Culture of the Peiping City Government.

The age range of the students is as follows: 21 are 16-20, 65 are 21-25, and 30 are 26-30 years old.

The work experience of the students is as follows: 77 have 3-4 years of working experience, 20 have 6-9 years, and 19 have 10-13 years.

The positions originally held by the students are as follows: junior clerks, 57; ordinary office workers, 20; clerks, 21; laborers, 4; section chiefs, office heads, and elementary school teachers, 2 each; and one cultural and one health worker.

The family background of the students is as follows: middle-class farmers, 56; poor farmers, 45; landlord class, 3; farm and other laborers, 2 each; and merchants, tenant farmers, and new rich farmers, one each.

All the students are loyal supporters of the revolution and have a high degree of political consciousness. They are being prepared for college, and will become the nation's future hard-core cadres. In addition to attending this school for 3 years, the students must attend 4 years of college.

STAT

Therefore, the total time for their studies will be 7 years. Thus, the students must be determined to study if they are to complete their education.

However, the students do not lack enthusiasm. For example, Wang Ch'eng-hsuan left his sickbed to register when he heard about the school. He had worked as a junior clerk in the administrative office of the Committee of Finance and Economics in the central government. He is now 22 years old, but had joined the party when he was 14. He was unable to get an education because he was poor. He later joined a public security unit, but could not find any time for study. However, he realized his shortcomings when he came to work in Peiping. He found that he was unable to make up the reports required by his office. Therefore, he decided to go to school and learn to read and write.

Miss Sung Sheng-yun, the daughter of a farm laborer, never had had a chance to get an education. She is a nurse, and had worked with children's units during the revolution. When she arrived in Yen-an in 1944, she wanted to study, but instead, was assigned to work in a nursery. At first, she protested strongly, but was later convinced of the correctness of the assignment. After long years of work, she was finally given an opportunity to attend school.

The curriculum of this school stresses the study of Chinese because it forms the basis for all other subjects which the student must study and is vital in connection with later work. This subject is not difficult for the students. They already have a good speaking knowledge of the language and have also had experience organizing their thoughts for oral presentation. Arithmetic is the other subject of prime importance. History, geography, and science are of secondary importance.

The school has three divisions, A, B, and C. Students in each division study the same subjects and take the same examinations, but on different levels. The language classes are all on the level of first-year junior middle school, but there are different levels in the arithmetic courses. During recent arithmetic examinations, most of the students in divisions A and B passed with a grade of 90 percent, and in Division C 9 students passed with a 90 percent mark and 9 failed.

The classes meet 59 hours per week. Regular classes meet for 30 hours and the balance of the time is devoted to private study. The class time is allocated as follows: language, 12 hours; arithmetic, 7 hours; science, 3 hours; and history, geography, political science, and physical training, 2 hours each. The time devoted to private study in language is about half the time devoted to class work on the subject; to arithmetic, about the same number of hours; and to other subjects, about one or 2 hours.

Selection of a text for the language course, poses a problem. The text must have a great political value and be adapted to the requirements of workers and peasants. Some of the textbooks which have been used are I-ho Shang-ping ti Yuan-wang (The Desire of a Wounded Veteran) Ch'uan-chi ti Hsiao (The Precious One of the Family), Liu Erh-pao Lueh-han (The Sweat of Liu Erh-pao), and Wang Kuei and Li Hsiao-hsiao. These books bring out the heroism of the people in the revolutionary struggle.

The difficulty with geography textbooks is that most of them were prepared during the Chiang Kai-shek regime. However, the teachers overcome this defect by preparing their own lectures for this course.

STAT

The arithmetic textbook now in use was prepared by the mathematics department of Peking Normal University. The main difficulty found in teaching this course is that the students do not use accepted formulas for solving their problems. Being mature people with much practical experience, the students have their own way of doing arithmetic.

Originally, history was taught 3 hours per week, one hour for the history of China and 2 hours for the history of social development. However, this was found too difficult for the students as they were unable to concentrate on a large number of subjects. So, this course is now given only 2 hours per week. Now, during the first 2 years, all the time is devoted to general history. During the 3d year, the time is devoted entirely to the history of social development.

The time allotted for political science has been increased from one to 2 hours per week. Under this plan, the New Democratic Principles and the three important documents of the People's Consultative Council could be completed in one year instead of having to be carried over to the 3d year.

The text for botany is a translation of a Soviet textbook published in the Northeast.

The students take their physical training along with the students of the Ta-tung Middle School. Once a week, they take field trips. Recently, they visited the Palace of Culture and saw a demonstration given by a Soviet Youth Cultural Team.

The Peiping school originally adopted the Northeast system of grading papers by using the five categories of grades. However, the Ministry of Education did not approve of this method, so it has been replaced by the percentage system. Hu Ch'ao-chih, principal of the school, thinks the former system is better. He is also in favor of a midterm examination instead of a single final examination.

Soviet experts recently visited the school. Their observation was that the students should be encouraged to ask questions. These questions, they pointed out, will reveal the degree of comprehension of the students.

The teachers at this school must have a high degree of political awareness. They must know their subjects well and have an earnest desire to teach workers and peasants. The 3 divisions of the school now have 7 full-time and 3 part-time teachers. One of the full-time teachers was formerly a lecturer at Peking University and had taken a 9-month course in political science. The arithmetic teachers were from Peiping middle schools and were qualified to teach middle-school subjects. Two other teachers were formerly middle school teachers.

The students work hard. Many do not sleep until their work is done. It was found necessary to have the students write their compositions in class in order that this work might not interfere with their other activities. Their compositions are on such subjects as the opening of school, my life, mother, an unforgettable event, and May Day.

This school has already attracted world wide attention. The Ambassador from Czechoslovakia recently visited the school and wrote about it in a newspaper article. Soviet experts often visit it and give their valued opinions. Representatives from the Harbin Engineering College, Northeast Workers and Peasant Short Term Middle School, and the Peking Normal University's Worker and Peasant Short Term Middle School have all visited this school.

STAT

SHANSI PROVINCE WORKER AND PEASANT SHORT TERM ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

(Prepared by Shansi Provincial Department of Education)

Pursuant to a directive of the Central People's Government regarding the organization of short-term schools for cadres from the worker and peasant classes, the Department of Education of Shansi Province has organized such schools in T'ai-yuan and the seven special-administrative districts of the province.

The schools were established at different times, but by the end of June [year not given; presumably 1950], there were schools with 137 teachers and 1,255 students. A breakdown of the students showed that there were 652 men and 603 women, 649 party members, and 142 youth corps members. Their ages were: under 25 years, 619 persons; 25-30, 262; and over 30, 211.

A summary of these statistics show that almost half of the class were women; four fifths, party or corps members; two thirds, from middle-class peasant families; three fifths, under 25 years old; and three fifths with 1-3 years' work experience.

Most of the students had gone through the revolutionary struggle and are eager to study. They are able to discuss problems intelligently, but cannot remember well. They have little or no ability to do self-study. Some of them are even blind to their own future. They complain about their studies, lack confidence in their work, and have a lackadaisical attitude.

Many even felt that they were assigned to the school as punishment or to keep them occupied. The classes within the school did not work well together at first, and there was a strong feeling of provincialism among the students. Many students refused to forget that they were cadres and still strove for position and honor in the class. Some students left without permission and never returned. However, women students, on the whole, behaved better than the men. During the pioneer period, most of the schools had to face these problems.

The staff consisted of the principal, a dean, and 62 teachers, and included 8 college graduates, 22 high and normal school graduates, 23 junior middle school or short-term middle school graduates, and 11 elementary school graduates. Those with less than a year in revolutionary work totaled 22 persons; those with 3-10 years, 30 persons; and those with over 10 years, 14 persons.

Many of the teachers lacked confidence and experience. Some failed to prepare their lessons properly, because they thought teaching workers and peasants was easy work. Other teachers considered it a demotion to be transferred from a high school to a short-term school. Some teachers were afraid of their students because they did not have as long a record of revolutionary work as their students.

In most instances, the problem of school buildings was satisfactorily taken care of by the school administration, the only drawbacks being inadequate athletic and library facilities.

However, one of the most serious problems was the indifferent attitude of the local authorities toward worker and peasant schools. Many local government offices did not observe the school's regulations. They sent overage, sick, incompetent, or otherwise unsatisfactory cadres to the school. In some cases, those selected had to be later rejected.

STAT

Academic System

The academic plan calls for an elementary and an advanced division. Each division meets for a year and a half, each semester lasting about half a year. Within each division, the students are divided into classes according to their proficiency in the subject. On an average, there should be about 50 persons to a class, with no classes with less than 30 persons.

The entrance requirements state that the student must be under 30 years of age and in good health, and must possess qualifications worthy of development. The student must also have served as a cadre at the ch'u level for at least one year or as a clerk for 3 years.

Illiterate and semiliterate persons are placed in the elementary division. Those with an elementary school education are placed in the advanced division. The students are classified on the basis of their knowledge of language and arithmetic.

Class work and self-study each get 24 hours a week. The classes must meet at least 23 weeks every half-year. Students must pass a final examination in all subjects before they are entitled to a diploma. If the student fails in only one course, he receives a conditional diploma. He must make up this deficiency within one year. If the student fails in two courses, he is required to repeat all the courses for that year.

While a person is in school, he cannot be transferred by his office. In cases of serious illness, he can be excused only by permission of the special administrative district. The special administrative district is also empowered to order any student who has left school to resume his studies. The provincial government must approve the transfer of a student to another locality when he is attending school.

The courses for the elementary division include 12 hours per week of language, 6 hours of arithmetic, and 6 hours of general knowledge. For the advanced division, there are 10 hours per week of language, 8 hours of arithmetic, and 6 hours of general knowledge. Athletics and music are not given as formal courses.

The textbooks for these courses are those especially prepared for short-term schools, but regular textbooks may also be used. The important object is for each division to complete its work in a year and a half.

Past Results and Achievements

In conducting a short-term school, full attention must be devoted to the complex problem of the students. Great patience must be shown when correcting the students' thinking. They must be helped to overcome their uncooperative attitude and liberal ways of thinking. They must be taught to have confidence.

In the Lin-fen school, the students took the attitude that they were sent there as punishment or to keep them occupied. Many lacked confidence, and said they were too old to learn or preferred to go home and work. Others were simply lazy, and refused to carry out their study programs in an orderly manner. Some worried about marriage or family affairs. Others took the haughty attitude that they were heroes of the revolution and were being mistreated.

However, after the students were assisted in overcoming these worries, they applied themselves to study with great determination. Hsu Kuo-chen, a 32-year-old illiterate, learned 260 words in 2 months. After 100 days, those who had been completely illiterate were able to write simple letters.

STAT

At the Ch'ang-chih school, students who could write only 100-word compositions when they entered were able to write 300- to 500-word themes after a short period of study. They had also reduced their composition mistakes from 10 to merely 5 percent. Students who could not write arabic numerals were able to do simple arithmetic problems after 100 days of study.

It must be pointed out that these achievements were made under adverse conditions. These results will be even better when the students have greater self-confidence and the school administrators have more experience in the management of worker and peasant short-term schools.

Management and Organization of Classes

The importance of learning must be strongly impressed on the students. They must be taught the importance of education in national construction by having the great achievements of the revolution cited to them. They must know that the worker and peasant cadres will be the hard-core cadres of new China, and they must study to supply the need for such cadres.

That the students may see their problems in relation to others, they must hold frequent meetings. At these meetings, they can exchange experiences and help solve each other's difficulties.

The students at the school in Yu-tsu wept after one such meeting. They decided to improve discipline in the school and to study until they succeed. They also improved the school by reducing personal criticism to a minimum and placing greater emphasis on public praise of individual achievements.

Since most of the students in these schools are members of the party or the youth corps, these two organizations should take the lead in maintaining discipline in the school. They should introduce the practice of criticism and self-criticism to improve the morale of the school. Activities among the students should help the students solve their difficulties and promote their interest in learning.

At the school in Ch'ang-chih, the language course is taught at the mental level of the students. When Chao Fu-chuan protested that he was too old to learn, he was given the lesson on Liu Chang-ken to study. After that, he changed his thinking and said that he would continue to study as long as he lived.

Fixing regular periods for reviewing the students' work is another way to help them. It gives them an opportunity to judge their progress and to have self-confidence which many students lacked because they could not see the progress they had made.

At the school in Ch'ang-chih, the students are graded according to four criteria. These criteria include proficiency in studies, attention to work, effort in learning, and discipline both in and out of class. This system engendered confidence in the students and helped them overcome their problems.

The school in Fen-yang uses another standard. At this school, language is used as the criterion for classifying the students. Books I-VIII of the language text have 2,300 words. An average student should learn 500-600 words a school year. A student with a knowledge of 200-300 words, therefore, has the equivalent of only half a year in elementary school. However, he can be graded according to his ability to use these words in writing compositions.

STAT

In classifying the students, two tests must be given since they do not all report to school at the same time. The first test consists of questions divided into simple, intermediate, and advanced categories. These tests determine into which group the student should be placed. Then he must take a second test to determine the particular class to which he should be assigned.

Students are placed in the two lowest classes by determining the number of words they know. Those to be placed in the intermediate classes are determined by their ability to write sentences. Those to be placed in the advanced classes are determined by their ability to write compositions.

Elementary classes using Book I of the reader should complete their work in a year and a half. Those using Book IV should do so in one year. Those using Book V, in one year; and those using Book VII, in half a year. After completing the elementary classes, the students enter the advanced class.

Arithmetic should be taught according to the ability of the students to absorb the material. The theory of rapid instruction and learning is basically incorrect. The students must learn well a little at a time before proceeding.

They should be drilled in such basic elements as well-written figures and neatly calculations. Such work as addition and subtraction of whole numbers should not be done carelessly.

In learning to write, the students must learn not only proper stroking, but also how to prepare their writing ink properly. These steps are essential to a good foundation for learning.

Most of the students have had some experience in practical affairs, but they feel greatly handicapped in their work by their lack of book knowledge. They are anxious to be able to read books, newspapers, and notices. They want to be able to write reports, receipts, and letters, as well as to use the abacus.

In class instruction, real-life examples familiar to the students must be used. Such subjects as land reform, the struggle against Japan, and rural life are acceptable subjects for these students. Instruction must coordinate theory and practice. It is necessary to appeal to the reasoning power instead of to the memories of the students in making explanations since they are mature and can reason better than memorize.

At the school in Hsin Hsien, the students were taught lessons based on a son's letter to his father and a notice of a village leader's meeting. After going over these in class, the students were given similar assignments. They welcomed these assignments because they were familiar with such subjects.

In another case, the students learned about the eclipse of the moon. The students made drawings of various phases of the eclipse and were told that it would take place on 3 April 1950. On the night of the eclipse, the teacher took the students out to observe it. His scientific explanation helped to wipe out the superstitious fears of the students. It is best to use practical examples to illustrate classroom work since mature students do not readily believe in book knowledge.

STAT

The correct evaluation of the student's work is an important step in good learning. It is best if the students are allowed to correct their own work. The teacher could also help the students by publicly correcting mistakes and explaining the errors. By these methods, the students can understand the difficulties involved.

Another important phase in education is the holding of faculty discussion meetings. The teachers can also learn by attending model classes or each other's classes. All this helps the teachers overcome their indifference and lack of proper planning in their work.

These experiences clearly demonstrate some of the difficulties in teaching and studying in short-term schools. However, there is no easy way to learning, so both teachers and students should constantly strive to improve their work.

Some Problems and Proposals

The attitude of special administrative district and hsien officials is very important. Some officials have a low estimate of worker and peasant short-term schools, take an irresponsible attitude toward such schools. In selecting students for the school, they simply send their quota regardless of the qualifications of the individual. In some cases, the least able of the staff is sent; in many cases, the individual is sent without prior consultation. Sometimes persons are assigned to the school to get rid of them. These malpractices were especially notable in the Yun-ch'eng Special Administrative District.

In connection with the curriculum, many school officials failed to follow the required schedule. At the school in Yun-ch'eng, the officials changed the curriculum and disregarded the time allotted to each class.

At the school in Ch'ang-chih, the officials refused to advance the graduation time of the students. Other schools failed to fix the period required for graduation. The school at Hsing Hsien designated language and arithmetic as basic courses and made all others supplementary courses. It also designated 8 hours a week for arithmetic and 4 hours for general knowledge for the elementary classes.

At the school in Yu-tzu, the curriculum for the first half of the year provided for 16 hours of language every week for the first 2 weeks. But it provided for only 6 hours of arithmetic every week for both the first and last half of the year. Also, it provided only for natural science and health in its course on general knowledge for the elementary class, and history and geography for the advanced class. All these changes were contrary to regulations.

Regarding the promotion of students, worker and peasant schools do not follow the system of fixed grades, but instead have three divisions. However, the school at Hsing Hsien used the system of fixed grades and gave examinations in the basic courses. No student who failed in two courses was promoted.

Although the school at Fen-yang stated that promotion was based on individual courses, a failure in language was not a reason for nonpromotion; language grade was tied in with the grade for general knowledge on a 67-33 percentage basis.

The school at Lin-feng stipulated that failure in two subjects would result in nonpromotion. This and other examples are all violations, since they fail to base promotion on a single course.

STAT

The above examples clearly demonstrate the serious error of special administrative district and hsien officials who fail to implement the plan for worker and peasant short-term schools properly. It is important that the local officials carefully study the school plan to avoid mistakes and do their work properly. Problems arising from a failure of students to obey school regulations should be corrected by expelling the student if he is unwilling to conform to regulations. There are no excuses for disobedience.

In many areas, misunderstandings regarding the organization of the students have resulted in delays in setting up a student's organization. The school at Hsin Hsien for example, organized only a study committee among the students. However, the schools at Lin-ien, Yu-tzu, and Hsing Hsien organized regular student-body organizations which included social affairs in their activities. The group at Hsing Hsien made the serious mistake of calling itself a students' self-government committee. This is highly improper and reveals unprogressive thinking.

The student body should promote study among the students. It should also act as a channel of communication from the students to the higher authorities. Therefore, those schools without student groups should immediately organize student bodies. On the other hand, those schools with student-body organizations which do not conform to the principles laid down by the educational authorities should take steps to correct their mistakes.

Another problem faced by many schools is overzealous competition among the students. There is no quick way to learning, and shock-worker's techniques are not effective in education. Learning itself is competition; therefore competitions in study are highly improper. However, many school officials are still not fully cognizant of this situation. Steps should be taken to remedy this incorrect thinking at once.

Worker and peasant short-term schools are something new, and everyone feels that they must succeed. The schools must hold faculty meetings to improve the teachers' knowledge of their subjects and their teaching methods. New teachers especially must strive to improve the level of their political consciousness.

Another problem is the excessive zeal of the students. They often study too hard in an effort to learn everything at once. For example, the students at the school in Hsing Hsien often used their afternoon rest periods for study. Those at Ch'ang-chih complained of headaches and kept mumbling in their sleep. Some students suffered hemorrhage, while one is known to have gone insane. If these conditions are not corrected immediately, the health of the students will be seriously endangered. The school must control the enthusiasm of the students, provide good food, and allow time for recreation.

General problems which need attention concern improvements in the organization of the schools, the adoption of a regular plan of study, and the shortage of teachers. The worker and peasant short-term school program is just getting under way. It is too early to make generalizations from the meager experience available. The school authorities must learn as they go along. They must strive to establish model schools which will demonstrate the progress being made in this field of education.

STAT

ORGANIZATION OF MAKE-UP SCHOOLS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICES

(Prepared by T'ien Fu-sheng, and published in the Harbin Wen-chiao, August 1950)

The school administrative committee should be organized by responsible personnel from government offices. The chairman should be the principal of the school, and the members should be persons assigned to it by the government, office secretaries, and personnel chiefs.

This committee is primarily responsible for the development of the school, and must make regular reports to the government offices as required. It is also responsible for the hiring of the faculty and the over-all supervision and conduct of the school.

The instruction committee is composed of the principal, the dean, and representatives of the faculty and the students. The dean, who is responsible for the operation of the school, presides at committee meetings. This committee is responsible for the implementation of government directives and decisions of the administrative committee. It also assigns teachers, sets teaching standards, and takes steps to improve teaching conditions.

The faculty subcommittees are organized along subject lines, such as language, mathematics, etc. If there are not enough faculty members to form a subcommittee, the teachers can join to form a history-geography subcommittee, etc. These subcommittees study the decision of the instruction committees and exchange experiences.

Because of the varying standards of the students, they must be placed in different divisions so that there is some uniformity in their ability to learn. The students in each division are again broken down into groups. Each group is composed of students of the same ability living near each other. They discuss their mutual problems and relieve the teacher of the need to make extensive individual explanations.

Activists in each class act as leaders during class meetings. These meetings discuss the decisions of the school affairs committee and the instruction committee, and see to their implementation. Teachers are often called in to participate in the discussions.

The school must have regular roll-call books and must supply absence forms to government offices. The teachers check the roll and record all leaves of absence requested by the government offices. The dean collates the absences, and the month's record is submitted to the school and the government offices involved. Students on field assignments from their offices must take their school work with them. Teachers taking leave must provide a substitute.

Teachers must fill out a weekly chart for submission to the dean's office showing the amount of work planned and the amount actually completed.

Examinations should be given according to the work completed and not scheduled arbitrarily. The time, nature, content, and form of the examination must be approved by the instruction committee. The results of the examination must be posted so that the students can see them.

In case the student is transferred from one office to another, the office must notify the school. The school then prepares a transcript which the student needs to enter the school at his new office.

STAT

Judging from the experiences gained by the spare-time schools in Kalgan and other north Chahar areas, the attitude of the people toward spare-time schools is very important. Officials in the government often have little consideration for the schools. They complain of the expense and the demands on their staff. However, their erroneous attitude must be corrected promptly. They must be made to realize that the nation's future depends on improving the cultural level of these students.

The students must overcome their critical attitude toward book learning and pay due respect to their teachers. They must not try to evade hard study by constantly devising short cuts.

The teachers must overcome their conservatism and look on their work as a revolutionary responsibility. They must gain the confidence of the students by preparing their lessons, attending meetings, and having patience with their students.

The administrative and instruction committees should take the lead in organizing the students for study. They should call general meetings to discuss study plans. After a general agreement, the students should sign a study compact.

This compact consists of three parts. The first deals with the school and the student body. The school sets its standards with the assurance that the students can meet them. The student body then gives the school its support, and will see that the students do their work.

The second part of the compact is between the teachers and the students. Both the teachers and students agree to prepare lessons, attend classes on time, and put every effort into their work.

The third part of the compact concerns the students only. It stipulates that students agree to help each other, to respect their teachers, and to work according to schedule.

In addition to providing fixed periods for review, etc., the school must support extracurricular activities and such projects as wall newspapers, correspondence with other schools, and student exhibitions.

(Note: Material for this article was gathered during the conference of principals of provincial-level spare-time schools sponsored by the Department of Education of Chahar, 20 May 1950.)

EXPERIENCES OF NORTH CHINA PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY UNIVERSITY IN OPERATION OF ITS SPARE-TIME SCHOOLS

(Prepared by Chang Huai-chang, and published in the Peiping
Jen-min Jih-pao, 26 December 1949)

[Comment: Commenting on the achievements of the spare-time school of the North China People's Revolutionary University, this article praises the school's policy of assigning only one teacher to a class (pao-pan-chi). However, it points out that the success of this system depends on its adoption as a basic system by the school, limiting each teacher to two subjects, and employing only college graduates as teachers. The article stresses the importance of limiting the number of subjects assigned to each teacher so that the teacher can prepare his lessons well.]

STAT

General Conditions

The spare-time school of the North China People's Revolutionary University was organized in September under the direction of the dean of the university. All personnel of the university whose educational standard was below the level of junior middle school were required to attend this school. Of the 636 persons who enrolled in the school, 24 percent were cadres and 76 percent were university employees from 40 different lines of work. Among those enrolled in the school, 57 percent were illiterate, 25 percent had the equivalent of a lower elementary school education, and 18 percent had the equivalent of an elementary school education or higher.

The school was divided into a junior middle school division, a higher elementary school division, and a lower elementary school division. These divisions were again divided into ten regular classes and two make-up classes.

Chinese was the basic course. History, geography, mathematics, natural science, political science, and social history were supplementary courses. Students were encouraged to improve themselves in these subjects by private study.

After 2 months of instruction, illiterate persons in the lowest grade knew 80-130 words which they could read and write. Students who formerly knew no Arabic numerals were now able to do simple multiplication and division. Students in the second grade who knew about 200-300 words, but could not write sentences, were now able to write simple diaries. Of the students in the higher elementary grades, 30 percent could now write short compositions without mistakes. Students in the junior middle school grades who could write only compositions before could now write excellent diaries.

Methods of Instruction

Because of differences among the students in cultural standards, working hours, and job status, it was found very difficult to organize the classes satisfactorily. However, each student was graded according to his knowledge of the language, time spent at work compared with other students, and time off.

In this way, students of similar circumstances were placed in the same class. But special steps such as make-up classes, special coaching, and private study, had to be arranged for about one third of the students. In the case of arithmetic, the differences in standards was solved by dividing the students into two groups.

The school was temporarily organized on a 4 1/2-year basis. Junior middle school was allotted a year and a half; higher elementary school, one year; and lower elementary school, 2 years.

The school year was divided into two semesters, each with 20 weeks of classwork. The classes met six times a week for a total of 12 hours. Thus the entire basic curriculum of lower and higher elementary school and junior middle school could be completed in 4 1/2 years.

In the first year, the students must learn 500 words and be able to write simple sentences. In the second year, they must be able to write simple diaries. In the third year, they must be able to write simple compositions and read the Kung-jen Jih-pao (Worker's Daily). By the fourth year, they must be able to write reports and read official documents and theoretical works.

STAT

According to past experience, these objectives can only be achieved by giving high priority to reading and writing. Language should outweigh other courses three to one.

Since the students are mature adults, there is no need for repeating subjects. History need not be taught in the lower elementary grades. Ancient and modern history can be taught in the higher elementary grades, and modern history in junior middle school. The mathematics course for the higher elementary grades can be taught in the lower elementary grades, thus completing the elementary-grade mathematics course in 3 years.

Textbook material for the language courses in the lower elementary grades is prepared by the school itself. Textbooks designated by the North China Education Department are used for the higher grades. Material for the mathematics courses is taken from textbooks for higher elementary grades and supplemented by problems prepared by the teacher.

In its administrative organization, the dean of the university is concurrently the president and vice-president of the school. The staff consists of two secretaries, who also teach classes, and eight full-time teachers. Each is assigned to one class under the "pao-pan" system. This means that the teacher teaches all the subjects for that class. This also gives the teacher a better insight into the capabilities of his class.

Based on the level of their classes, the teachers are divided into four groups. In addition to daily informal meetings, the teachers hold weekly and monthly meetings. Students are organized into mutual aid groups so that they can help each other with their lessons.

Teaching Experiences

Mutual-aid private study groups serve to help the students prepare their work and review their lessons. When the students cannot solve their problems within their own group, the teacher is called in to participate in the discussion. If the problem still cannot be solved, the teacher must bring it before the class for discussion. The students learn much faster this way, and develop initiative in solving problems.

The students in spare-time schools are mature and find it difficult to concentrate and to memorize. Therefore, teachers in spare-time schools must not give the students more than they can absorb. Much more time must be devoted to review so that the students can retain what they are taught.

Teachers must not waste time in preparing long lessons. All study plans must be approved by the students, so that they will support them. In the case of the study plan for the language course in the junior middle school, it was found quite sufficient to give only 2 hours a week to this course.

The democratic system of correcting composition papers was instituted in the junior middle school classes. Under this system, the teacher corrects part of the papers and hands them to the student study group which discusses the corrections. Then the teacher gives the rest of the papers back to the students, who make their own corrections. The teacher, however, goes over the papers for a final correction. Since this procedure takes up much of the class time, written compositions are only assigned once every 2 weeks. However, diaries should be written every day and corrected by the students themselves.

- E N D -

- 15 -